

NASSS Workshop II: Chair's Summary of Discussion (13: 30–15: 30, July 7, 2008)

SASAKI TAKUYA

RIKKYO UNIVERSITY

Professor Ito Go gave a presentation titled as “Regionalism in the Asia-Pacific and US Interests,” relying on the paper and resume that he had forwarded prior to the afternoon session. He began by explaining, among other things, the political and economic transformation of Asia since the end of the Cold War, and the foreign policy implications of an emerging regionalism in East Asia for the US. In this context, Professor Ito pointed out, in particular, the advent of a “rich” Asia, China’s economic rise, its advocacy of a new conception of security, and Taiwan’s democratization. He observed that these new factors have posed for the US a fresh challenge in formulating a new leverage in the region as Washington is concerned that it might be crowded out of a “new” Asia. Professor Ito argued that in coping with the new situation, the US counts on its military presence in the area and makes ad hoc pragmatic management with non-military methods.

Following Professor Ito’s presentation, Professor Yi Okyeon, succinctly summarizing the Ito paper, raised the following points: where to place North Korea in the whole picture of an East Asian regionalism, and how to nurture and promote a regional identity in the region. She also pointed out the paper’s insufficient attention to US interests in FTAs. At one point, Professor Yi said that Europe has a multi-level institutional process to further an identity as a European while in Asia many things remain still pretty much on a country basis. She suggested that Professor Ito did not give careful consideration to the question of identity that, as a social construction, would be indispensable in ensuring regional integration.

In responding to the Ito paper, Professor Michael Mastanduno explained the relationship between bilateralism and regionalism, and the so-called “double reassurance policy” of the US in Asia. He then wondered how politically important regionalism in Asia is, adding that this question is something those concerned in the region have yet to address. He also contended that the problem for the US in Asia is whether to employ a balance of power onshore or offshore, and explained that liberal internationalists expect that by promoting commerce and finance with China, and thus by integrating the country in the US-led international economy, its foreign policy would be transformed into a more peaceful one.

From the floor, we had a number of insightful comments and questions. Mr

Renny Babiarz of the Johns Hopkins University asked about the role of China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in an East Asian regionalism. In a similar vein, Professor Takada Kaori of Meiji University inquired about Russia's part in it. Mr. Jeffrey Hornung of George Washington University asked for clarification about the constituent members of an East Asian regionalism in the Ito paper. Mr. Shin Han of Seoul National University indicated uneasiness over the recent rise of nationalism in Asia, suggesting the difficulty of forming a regional identity. Professor Machidori Satoshi of Kyoto University asked which nation would be most interested in and benefitted by regional integration. Professor Sugiyama Shigeru of Shizuoka University wondered about the interaction between Japan's job market and the East Asian job market, and referred to the Japanese "mental war" and "colonial mentality" against the rest of Asia. Ms Kohama Shoko of Tokyo University asked a question about US interests and influence in a "new" Asia.

It was regrettable that because Professor Ito's paper was rather ambiguous on major points, the whole afternoon discussion was not developed in such a way as to focus on certain significant aspects of East Asian regionalism and sharpen our understanding of them. Nonetheless, the session was highly fruitful in illuminating a number of knotty problems that East Asia faces in forming a regional order and in defining US interests in it.